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A  
LETTER

TO

THOMAS PAYNE, ~~Esq~~;

WRITTEN

IN CONSEQUENCE OF THE ONE LATELY ADDRESSED  
BY HIM TO

MR SECRETARY DUNDAS.

---

*" No Sow-gelder did blow his horn  
" To geld a cat, but cry'd REFORM ;  
" .....  
" And felt such lowel-bankerings  
" To see an empire ALL OF KINGS ;  
" Deliver'd from th' Egyptian awe  
" Of JUSTICE, GOVERNMENT, and LAW."*

HUDIBRAS.

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EDINBURGH:  
PRINTED FOR WILLIAM CREECH.

M,DCC,XCII.

Mc Gill. 1950 H54

TO

THOMAS PAYNE, Esq.

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QUOUSQUE TANDEM ABUTERE, CATILINA, PATIENTIA NOSTRA? QUAMDIU ETIAM FUROR ISTE TUUS NOS ELUDET? QUEM AD FINEM SESE EFFRENATA JACTABIT AUDACIA?

—————*Cic. in Cat.*

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EDINBURGH, 26 *June* 1792.

SIR,

I BEG leave to trouble you with a few words on the subject of your letter to Mr Dundas of the 6th June current. If I judge right, this letter was written in consequence of your feeling hurt at the debates in Parliament, and proclamation for the suppressing of libels and seditious pamphlets; and, of course, you meant,

A

by

by writing it, to defend your *Rights of Man* from such an imputation.

SUCH being the case, I am naturally led to examine your defence ; but, before going to particulars, it is necessary that we should be at one with respect to what is meant by a libel or seditious pamphlet. I shall therefore, in the view of coming together, put the question : “ Should a bankrupt alien go to America, and write with the avowed purpose of overturning the system of government there, and of new-modeling it according to his own fanciful ideas, would you call such production a seditious libel ?”—You cannot answer in the negative, as your opinion is that it is the best of possible governments ; you must therefore answer in the affirmative.

Now we are at one ;—and a seditious  
publication



publication is that which is written with the express design of overturning any one system of government ; for it would be an insult on common sense and the rights of mankind, to say that all nations should confine themselves to one *unique* constitution, let their internal circumstances or peculiar situations be what they would.

If this is true, Mr Payne, and which you neither do nor can deny, What are your pamphlets but libels,—seditious in the extreme ? What must every citizen of the world that is endowed with sound sense and reason think of you ?—What must an Englishman, an Irishman, or a Scotsman, think of an *alien*,\* as I believe you are, who attempts to overturn a system of government that has stood the test of ages ?—For an itinerant political quack to pretend to more sound sense and judgment than all the inhabi-

tants of the British isles put together, and to dictate his own fanciful form of government to them, is in the highest degree assuming. Do you really think, Sir, that seven or eight millions of people will submit to pin their political faith to your sleeve, or that we shall any longer suffer indignities and insults from your pen?—I hope we have more sense of our own honour and understandings than to be led by the nose, as an ignorant mob some years ago was, by the speeches and writings of a person perhaps not more insane than you.

A LIBEL or seditious paper can only exist in established governments. Whatever is published against any regular system of government is, to all intents and purposes, seditious. I must acknowledge, however, that no libel or seditious pamphlet can exist in a country, such as France, where king Mob rules, a kingdom

dem after your own heart; or among savages, robbers, an unruly mob, or bedlamites. It can only have its existence in a country where the people have chosen a particular form of government; and where that form of government is sought to be overturned, either by one of their own number, or by some itinerant political quack.

I do not know whether you pretend to be a savage, a robber, a mobite, or a bedlamite; but sure I am, that, if you are not one of them, you must entertain the idea that you are writing and dictating to people under some one or all of those descriptions; otherwise you durst not obtrude your opinions upon three great and polished nations now most intimately linked together; nor would you have ventured to dictate to them, had you not taken them for such, or at least for fools. Some one of all of those descriptions

criptions are no doubt among us ; but, I bless God, that the far greater part of us are endowed with sound sense and reason, and will despise your writings as the ravings of an insolent insane, who, for his immoralities, being despised in America, has been necessitated to come to the eastward in quest of adventures.

WHILE you was in France, Mr Payne, your rights of man could be no libel, as there king Mob is in his glory : but you ought to have considered that Britain is in a different situation. How would you reprobate, as libels, the writings of any travelling political apostle that would dare to attempt an overturn of the American constitution, although a system of yesterday ;—*multo magis* will every virtuous citizen, and such there are in America as well as here, execrate your writings as tending to overturn *our* constitution—a constitution that has stood the  
test

test of ages. Do you think we have no greater nor wiser men among us than you? No, we are three great nations of fools, who knew nothing about the rights of men, till you, our political apostle, came, like another Mahomet, among us, to enlighten us, and to coble or new-model our constitution, which, as a quack who wants employment, you pretend is out of all order.—Indeed, to a person of your circumstances, a job must be very material.

IN your letter or defence, you set out with giving us your creed in these words:  
 “ I do not *believe* that there are to be  
 “ found in the writings of any author,  
 “ *ancient or modern*, on the subject of go-  
 “ vernment, a spirit of *greater benignity*,  
 “ and a *stronger inculcation of moral princi-*  
 “ *ples*, than in those which I have pub-  
 “ lished.” That is, you prove by your-  
 self, and you can prove by none greater,  
 that

that your writings are not seditious ; but, on the contrary, for *benignity* and inculcation of *moral* principles, they are the *best ever were* written. So that you are not merely contented with overturning our system of government, but mean at the same time to overturn our *religion* itself. We are now taught by our new apostle, Mr Payne, to despise the tenets and moral principles of the *Old and New Testament* as inimical to his system. The *rights of man* is a new substitute for the *Holy Bible*, which has idly told us, “ to give to Cæsar that which is Cæsar’s :” and our holy religion is at once overturned with our constitution. But know, Mr Payne, that altho’, in these kingdoms, there may be a few of your brother infidels, yet the bulk of the people will neither allow their religion nor their constitution to be trampled upon with impunity.

You next advertise yourself as a con-  
structor

structor of governments; and no doubt a man in your line must puff it away, like other quacks, to procure trade. Your writings, you say, come from a man who, “ by having lived in different countries, “ and under different systems of govern- “ ment, and who *being intimate in the con- “ struction of them*, is a better judge of the “ subject than those wanting your op- “ portunities.” Here you exhibit yourself as a cobbler of constitutions, posting thro’ different countries and different systems of government in the line of your business, puffing away and advertising every where. The last job you did was in France: how you was paid for it, I know not; but sure I am you did not get what you deserved. By the bye, Mr Cobbler, what kind of constitution have you erected there? I am afraid it is entirely of the negative kind: we hear of nothing but misrule and disorder from that quarter; and thousands have lost

their lives since your work began ; for my own part, I could discover nothing there like a system of government, unless you call that a system where the demons of discord and disorder are allowed to ride triumphant, with their national cockades in their hats, *i. e.* your Rights of Man.

IN short, Mr self-taught Cobler, we can say nothing in praise of your work ; and we do not wish to be gulled out of our money by employing you, and perhaps getting some of ourselves butchered to the bargain. In the name of wonder, why come here seeking employment,—where every man sits under his own vine, and under his own fig-tree ? You'll get better jobbing in Russia and Turkey than with us : or why not try Spain, the paternal country of your great, great grand uncle Don Quixote de la Mancha.

INDEED,



INDEED, Sir, if you had been possessed of principle, and had known any thing of religion and virtue, you would have employed your abilities in your beloved country of America. Why not attempt to amend the constitutions of the Indians of the back settlements? Why not form an alliance between the states and them, rather than with France and England, distant countries? Would it not be more for your honour, and the interest of humanity, to construct a system among savages that are so frequently engaged in murdering your fellow-citizens of America, than sow sedition and discord here, and attempt to overturn the government of a free and generous people, that have so long allowed a wandering and unprincipled libertine to live with impunity among them, while his employment is of all others the most ungenerous, *i. e.* that of sowing sedition among his benefactors, and of kindling a like flame here with

that which, just now, consumes a neighbouring kingdom ?

IT is true, a flame is nothing to you;— you are but a traveller, amusing yourself with the dust you kick up : but what is fun and amusement to you may be destruction to us. *Mais, ma pardon*, I should not have said that the fire you wish to kindle would be confined to your amusement alone ; you have something more material in view : in the confusion of a fire there are generally some fine pickings ; and no doubt you and your nimble finger'd brethren will not be idle.

WITH the designed purpose of imposing upon the weak and credulous, you tell us your instructions “ *come from a heart that knows not how to beguile.*” O modest apostle, we must believe you, because, like Mahomet, you have said it ! I wish you could make all your creditors, relatives

latives and brethren of America, believe as much of your heart. Your Rights of Man cannot possibly be a libel, or written with a bad intention, because you yourself have said it proceeds from a heart that knows not to beguile. Your defence is unanswerable!!!—Our apostle infallible, and so says your apostolical brother of Rome.

You next also advert to Mr Adam's speech. He, it seems, had said that your publications "reviled what is most sacred in the constitution, destroying every principle of subordination, and establishing nothing in their room."—Mr Adam, you say, had not read the second part of our new Bible, *the Rights of Man*. This I believe.—A person of his sound sense and judgment, after reading the first part, wou'd not give himself much trouble about the second. You say, that when he talk'd about something in the

the

the constitution that was most sacred,  
 “ you hope he did not mean hereditary  
 “ succession, a thing which appears *to you*  
 “ *a violation of every order of nature and*  
 “ *common sense.*” Here, again, because *in*  
*your opinion* hereditary succession is a vio-  
 lation of nature, we must think the same,  
 or be insulted. If any man is weak e-  
 nough to pin his political creed to the  
 tail of your opinion, he may if he chu-  
 ses; but, for my part, I assure you I shall  
 never think so meanly of myself, nor  
 shall I, while I have my senses, prefer a  
 constitution founded upon the opinion  
 and theory of Mr Payne, and which has  
 already produced such dreadful disorders  
 in another kingdom, to a constitution  
 founded on the experience and popular  
 opinion of ages.

If it is hereditary succession that is  
 meant by Mr Adam, I must join with  
 him ; for, if you wish to destroy the here-  
 ditary

ditary right of succession of our kings, you may, and certainly mean, upon the same principles, to cut off the hereditary right of succession of the Prince of Wales, and our nobility, and of course all our private rights of succession to our estates, whether real or personal. If this is not reviling what is most sacred, destroying every principle of subordination, and setting up nothing in their room, I leave every body to judge.

You tell us, *and you challenge any man to refute it*, “ that there does not exist a right  
 “ to establish hereditary government ;”  
 or, in other words, that no nation can at any period chuse a government for themselves without your concurrence. If, however, as you tell us in the next page,  
 “ the people who are to live afterwards  
 “ have always the same right to choose  
 “ a government for themselves as the  
 “ people had who lived before them,” it  
 follows

follows of consequence, that the people who lived before us had equally a right to choose their form of government, and certainly the choosing of a hereditary one existed in them—and the people in America have a right to do so now if they have a mind. Nay, I do not know but some day or other such a thing may take place among them;—their government is of yesterday, and is by no means in a state of stability. Our nation, from long experience, has in general approved of, and continued hereditary succession. The experience of ages has confirmed it to be the safest. It prevents all civil dissensions on the death of a sovereign, and produces a regular and continued form of government, which, in contrary circumstances, it never could do, as may be obvious to every body that thinks upon the subject. In some instances the nation has done otherways, and no doubt may do so still should the exigencies of the state require it.

As

As to what you say of bad and weak kings,—It can only bear a reference to despotic governments. In Britain a king holds simply a part,—not the whole reins of government :—In short, Sir, you do not understand our system.—A despot may do ill if he is a bad or weak man, but our constitution will not allow a British king to do so. He cannot do so were he so inclined. A cunning and designing prince, such a one as you yourself would be, might attempt mischief, as you are doing at present, although not yet a king ; but thanks to God we have a constitution that would and will counteract such attempts. Your remark, indeed, might answer in France, both while it had Louis XVI. a despot, and now while it has king Mob, still more despotic ; but it cannot bear the smallest reference to a king of the British islands,

You tell us, in pursuance of your infam-

C

mous

mous designs, that the social ties which bind us in society are *the chains of political superstition* ; and in the view of stirring up a tumultuous mob, you tell them “ those chains are *dissolving fast, and prosecutions will serve but to hasten that dissolution.*” And with a determined purpose to incite riot and confusion, you conclude your letter with saying, “ that the *ap-provers and protectors of your work*, (that “ is, certain descriptions of men) *now “ feel the immediate impulse of honour added “ to that of national interest.*” This, to be sure, is speaking to some of us, and speaking too to the purpose. The robber, the libertine, the weak, the wicked, and the bankrupt, are all summoned to your standard ; and some, no doubt, will attend it with pleasure : their honour, i. e. *your honour*, is hurt, because your new substitute for the Bible is proscribed. I myself once saw the honour of some thieves highly insulted, by the magi-  
strate



strate having ordered some goods saved from a fire to be surrounded by a party of foldiers.

A GOOD citizen, conscious of virtue and the rectitude of the reforms he proposed, would inculcate them in a very different manner. He would tell the people that such were his opinions, and that if they appeared in the same light to them, they ought to petition Parliament and instruct their members; and leave it to the great court of the nation, the representatives of the people, to decide upon it.

A MAN who endeavours to rouse a mob, is of all men the most dangerous to society;—he must either have interested views, be mad, or infamously wicked. In short, Sir, you put me in mind of the monkey in the fable, that, wishing to have the chestnut, and not daring to put its own paw into the fire to take

it, thrust in the cat's paw, as you wish to do the mob's ; and the mob too, like the cat, may be burnt, while you, unhurt, enjoy the only benefit. You certainly have selfish and ambitious views, Mr Payne. It is true that only the weak, the wicked, or mad, will listen to you ; yet such may do a world of ill, as was the case in Lord George Gordon's mob. People of weak understandings, although they frequently possess very good hearts, are easily mislead. They are often led away by designing people, or by a madman, as in the above instance, and which also may be the case here. A tinelled hazel rod is more esteemed by the weak than the finest cane ; and a few flowery words, uttered by a madman or a designing person, will often bring more applause than all the proverbs of Solomon.

You next assume to yourself the honour of establishing the American government ;

vernment ; at least, you tell us that it is established upon *your Rights of Man* ; and hold it up as your ideal government put into practice—a system of government, you say, better administered than any government in the world. But is it a government of that nature, as to continue stable and fixed ?—Can you say of it “ there is a rose newly blown of my rearing, that will never fade as other roses do.” I believe, Sir, that it is the test of ages, not of 15 or 16 years, that must stamp character and stability upon a government. Nor am I yet convinced that the American government originated from your Rights of Man. I do not however call it a bad system ;—it is too like our own to be called so : nor can I call it a good one, till it has been tried by the test of experience ; but I may use here an expression similar to what Sir James Melville said to Queen Elizabeth,

that

that if yours is the best government in America, ours is the best in Europe.

As to the difference of the government, expences, and taxes of the two countries, it is hardly worth the answering. Money, trade, and manufactures, are a great deal more plentiful and prevalent in Britain than in America, and the inhabitants more generous—Besides, our national debt and taxes are daily upon the decrease, and will still continue to be so, unless you should obtain your wish, and by raising a flame in the country, destroy our great resources, *manufactures and trade*. But farther, I believe the people, at least of those parts of our islands that possess a tolerable climate, *i. e.* England and Ireland, live much easier and happier under their heavy taxes, than the Americans under their smaller ones; and of this thou thyself, Mr Payne, art a proof. Why, in the name of wonder,

der, do you reside here, where you are burdened with insupportable taxes, rather than in America where you are free!—O Mr Payne, Mr Payne, your cloven foot is discovered. You either find that you can supply your wants at less expence with us than in America ; or know, that your vice and immorality have banished you that country.

As for the pension-list I do acknowledge it is very considerable, although not more so than formerly. The English are remarkable for being a generous people, and our ministry are Englishmen. You cannot, however, say that the money for the most part is ill bestowed.—You hint, indeed, of an offer of L. 1000 that was made to you for the copyright of *the Rights of Man*. I do confess I think this would have been very ill bestowed ;—but from the manner and place in which this circumstance is introduced,

I shrewdly

I shrewdly suspect it has not been done without some little design upon the pension-list. Daring libels like yours, and by needy persons like you, have often been published with similar views; and should the minority take your hint, which God forbid, they, by increasing their pension-list, would reduce it to one half at a stroke. What would you think of this saving, Mr Apostle?

You tell us, p. 13, and, as usual, refer us to your own Bible, the Rights of Man, where you have, you say, estimated the poor's rates of England at two millions annually. These poor's rates you wish to abolish; and, in lieu thereof, remit four millions out of the surplus taxes of government, after answering your ideal purposes of it, for the use of the poor of England;---that is, the Scottish portion of the taxes is to go to relieve England of its poor without any equivalent: or, in  
other

others word, Scotsmen are not included in *your Rights of Man*.

As to your whimsical proposition of an alliance with France and America ; if you were an honest and well meaning citizen of the states, and really had the interest of that country or ours at heart, it is morally impossible you would ever think of joining order with confusion---a regular government to an unruly mob. You yourself, at this moment, know full well the distracted situation of France, and can have no good motive in proposing this alliance. Indeed, I must acknowledge that the French system of misrule being a child of your own, and founded on the principles of the rights of man, must always be near your heart ; and perhaps, like the devil, you are best pleased with the country where all laws divine and human are trampled upon.

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YOUR

YOUR letter to Mr Dundas, Sir, cannot be called a defence of your writings ; it appears to me rather to be a studied insult upon the good sense of the nation. The individuals of every well regulated society respect and honour the heads of the society, as, in other words, it is respecting themselves ; and any member that vilifies the head and office-bearers of that society offers an insult to every individual of the society. I am aware, however, that where no order exists, there is no society, and of course no insult, no sedition, nor seditious pamphlet. The three kingdoms compose one great society or nation, and thanks to God, that, spite of Mr Payne, we are yet in a state of order and good government ; nor has the *amor patriæ* entirely left our country. We will not all tamely subscribe to the insults of a mendicant cobbler of constitutions.

As I esteem and venerate the constitution



tion of my country---a constitution not of yesterday---not founded upon the wild ideas of a single itinerant quack, but upon the broad base of ages of experience and popular opinion---I say, I cannot, in silence, allow you to attack and vilify it in your seditious libels---You vilify our constitution---you vilify our king. You talk of *king*, or *majesty*, or *madjesty*, thereby sneering at the whole nation, as if you deem'd us all a parcel of fools, for daring to call the head of our constitution *king*; because forsooth you would chuse to give him another name, or as if *nomina mutant rem*. You are every now and then talking of Mr Pitt's *boyish* administration---of his *extorting revenue*, and of his boasting *how much*. Thus you substitute insults for reasoning and verbage for facts. An indignity put upon our constitution, our king, and his ministers, we hold as an indignity and insult offered to every one of us.

If you admire your self-created governments of America and France, why not live in these countries. Your immoralities may bar you from the one, but in France, at least, you are admired ; thither fly, my friend—take my advice, lest a worse thing befall you. It will tend more to your honour to live in a government of your own making, than to reside and contract debts here without the honest means of re-payment, other than the produce of ungrateful insults offered to the very people among whom you pick up your subsistence.

You have the effrontery to refer Mr Adam to what you have said in your works as to abolishment of particular taxes, as if no knowledge was lodged any where else than in your books. Know then, Mr Payne, that some of those very taxes you mention, and many others,

are

are meant by administration to be abolished as occasion and circumstances occur; and such abolition will take place, altho' the name of Payne had never been heard of. Any reform necessary will also be made gradually, and step by step: but God forbid that our legislature should coalesce with your wild ideas, and all at once put an end to a constitution that we know from experience is a good one; for one that in our neighbouring kingdom exhibits daily, and almost before our eyes, the bloody marks of anarchy and confusion.

IN short, Sir, you write as if the British islands were entirely composed of ignorant and wicked men, without a single man of sense or of principle. Impressed with these ideas, you have travelled to illuminate the British hemisphere—to tell us what was impossible for the brains of Englishmen to comprehend or see through.

through. You arrogate to yourself the formation of American and French governments—and you arrogantly plume yourself that, by the force of your persuasive pen, you shall teach these unenlightened kingdoms to drop a system that has stood the test of ages, and adopt that of a miserable bankrupt, who entertains the mad idea of being one day put at the head of his new and blessed system—a system much to be longed after, especially when we consider the beauty and harmony of the government that subsists in a neighbouring kingdom, founded upon the principles of our new political apostle.

THE purport of your letter, you say, is to justify yourself from the charge Mr Adam has made. He considers the writings of Harrington, More, and Hume; as justifiable publications; and he accuses you of endeavouring to confuse, instead

instead of producing a system in the room of that which you have reasoned against.

MR HARRINGTON, Sir Thomas More, and Mr Hume, reasoned philosophically upon the subject, nor did they ever aim, like you, to spirit up a mob ; they never framed addresses and declarations for societies, met with the intention of disturbing the peace of the nation, nor ever had the effrontery of openly reviling the laws and constitution of their country ; they calmly and modestly strove to enlighten mankind, and argued with decency. While you publish your seditious pamphlet with impudence, as if oracular—revile the constitution—propose to overturn it—and anxiously propagate your absurd ideas, with the view not of instructing, but of inciting the unthinking crowd. How different from you is the modest Montesquieu, to  
whom

whom you can no more be compared, in matter of politics, than I to Hercules.— After praising the British constitution, he adds, “ Neither do I pretend by this, to  
 “ *undervalue other governments*, nor to say  
 “ that this extreme political liberty ought  
 “ to give uneasiness to those who have  
 “ only a moderate share of it. How  
 “ should I have such a design, I who  
 “ think that even the *excess of reason* is  
 “ not always desirable; and that man-  
 “ kind *generally find their account* better  
 “ *in mediums than in extremes.*” Vol. I,  
 B. II. Cap. 6.

THIS way of writing is too philosophical and modest to answer your purposes. You do not write to the learned and thinking part of mankind as all the above gentlemen have done; you are only pleased with extremes, and so address your writings to the sag end of society. It is to the illiterate and the wicked that  
 you

you speak, when you say in your letter, that "*in any case the work (i. e. your ideal constitution) will go on*---that the approvers and protectors of your works *now (i. e. since the proclamation) feel the immediate impulse of honour*, added to that of national interest."---Neither does this breathe the language of instruction ; for, had you either meant to instruct the ignorant, or to tell the truth, you would have warned them of the great danger of unloosing even a single pin of the constitution ; you would have pointed out to them the dreadful situation to which the French have brought themselves by following your system ; and you would tell them to be cautious not to hurt themselves and *their* honour, by avenging the affront put upon *your* honour.

You say, you have not only reasoned upon your new system, but gone farther ;

E

and

and you produce the American government as an instance of the representative system that you wish to palm upon us. The Americans, as a new nation, of *necessity* were obliged to adopt some form of government, and accordingly they have assumed one that appeared to them to accord best with their dispositions and circumstances.---This government however is as yet in the womb of experiment, and is of too short a standing to reason upon. At any rate, we are under no necessity to change our system, nor will we listen to you, as to an oracle, and all at once overturn a government that we know is a good one, for the idle purpose of making an experiment---an experiment that has already produced such dreadful effects in a neighbouring kingdom

You brag of the smallness of the public expence and revenues of America;  
and



and you make a statement that you know yourself to be untrue : you gloss it over, indeed, with saying, that *when* peace shall be concluded with the Indians, the expence will be reduced ; but you do not tell fairly and honestly that there is and has been perpetual warfare in your back settlements ; and that the Americans now find that a much greater force than what they used to have must be kept up all along their extensive frontiers ; so that the public expence is already greatly increased above your statement, and is still increasing. Besides, all your fine statement goes for nothing when the great want of money among the Americans is taken into the scale. Riches, arising from our trade and manufactures, flow from all quarters of the world to Britain, while America has no such resources. National as well as private expences keep pace with the riches or poverty of a country, and a penny in a poor country will go farther

than a shilling in a rich one. Hence the public expence of the whole of the Indian nations in America will not amount to the thousandth part of the American expence; and hence the expence of the latter is considerably less than ours; so that considering the situation, circumstances, and resources of both the countries, the Americans are fully as much, if not more burdened with taxes than the British.

You next blame Mr Adam for saying you wish'd to destroy *every principle of subordination*: This however most certainly is the case. You instigate the weak and wicked to form societies, with a view to inculcate as well as commemorate anarchy and confusion; and you boast of imposing upon them addresses and declarations inimical of subordination. You laugh at those imaginary beings, as you call them, kings and lords, and all the fraudulent trumpery

pery of courts ; that is, you ridicule all  
 magistracy whatever, by which you wish  
 effectually to destroy the principle of  
 subordination. Now we fear God, and  
 honour the king, as our chief magistrate;  
 and we deem that person unworthy of so-  
 ciety who does not respect its office-bear-  
 ers. You put us in mind of what Mon-  
 tesquieu says of the corruption of the  
 principles of democracy. “ The prin-  
 “ ciple of democracy is corrupted, (says  
 “ he,) not only when the spirit of equa-  
 “ lity is extinct, but likewise when they  
 “ fall into a spirit of *extreme equality*, and  
 “ when every citizen wants to be upon  
 “ a level with those he has chosen to  
 “ command him. Then the people, in-  
 “ capable of bearing the very power  
 “ they have intrusted, want to do every  
 “ thing of themselves, to debate for the se-  
 “ nate, to execute for the magistrates, and  
 “ to strip the judges of their office. *When*  
 “ *this is the case, virtue can no longer subsist*

“ in

“ *in the republic.* The people want to exer-  
 “ cise the functions of the magistrates,  
 “ who cease to be revered. The delibe-  
 “ rations of the senate are slighted ; all  
 “ respect is then laid aside for the sena-  
 “ tors, and consequently for old age. If  
 “ there is no more respect for old age,  
 “ there will be none soon for parents ;  
 “ deference to husbands will likewise be  
 “ thrown off, and submission to masters.  
 “ This licentiousness will soon taint the  
 “ mind ; and the restraint of command  
 “ be as fatiguing as that of obedience ;  
 “ wives and children will shake off all  
 “ subjection. No longer will there be  
 “ any such thing as *manners or virtue.*”  
 Vol. 1. B. 8. cap. 2.

IN order to prove that you do not  
 wish to destroy the principle of subordi-  
 nation, you adduce a paragraph from  
 your works, which is nothing to the  
 purpose. “ Formerly (you say,) when  
 “ divi-

“ divisions arose respecting government,  
 “ recourse was had to the sword, and  
 “ a civil war ensued. That savage cus-  
 “ tom is now exploded by the new sys-  
 “ tem, and recourse is had to a *national*  
 “ *convention*. Discussion and the gene-  
 “ ral will arbitrates the question; and  
 “ to this private opinion yields with a  
 “ good grace, and order is preserved un-  
 “ interrupted.” All this is mere ver-  
 bage. You speak of your new system  
 exploding the sword and civil war, as if  
 such had been enjoined by our system.  
 How do you prove or can insure us a-  
 gainst a civil war, or that order will be  
 preserved in a confused meeting of some  
 millions of people congregated from eve-  
 ryquarter of the island to your ideal con-  
 vention, or that the general will is al-  
 ways to arbitrate the question? Are you  
 to be teller of the votes? Can you tell us  
 how many months will be required to  
 take them? Who is to supply such a  
 great

great body of men with victuals, or pay their travelling expences?—But it is needless to dwell any longer upon ideal nonsense.

For my part, I can presage nothing but general confusion and uproar from your national convention, and the idea of it recalled to my remembrance what is said in Hudibras of the tumults of last century.

“ For when they came to shape the *model*,

Not one could fit another's noddle ;  
But found their light and gifts more wide  
From fadging than th'unsanctify'd,  
While every individual brother  
Strove hand to fist against each other.  
And still *the maddest and most crack'd*  
*Were found the busiest to transact.*

For, tho' most hands dispatch apace,  
And make light work (the proverb says,)  
Yet

Yet many different intellects  
 Are found t'have contrary effects,  
 And many heads t'obstruct intrigues,  
 As slowest insects have most legs."

AND after all, matters would most probably end in the way Montesquieu tells us the tumults of the last century ended: "After a series of tumultuary  
 " motions and violent shocks, they were  
 " obliged to have recourse to the very  
 " government which they had so odiously  
 " proscribed." Vol. I. B. III. Cap. 3.

By the bye, you have cut out plenty of work for your national convention. In your address and declaration palmed upon the select meeting of Friends of Universal Peace and Liberty at the Thatch'd-house tavern; and which is bound up with your letter, you use these words: "We  
 " profess and proclaim it as our prin-  
 " ciple, that every nation has *at all times*

“ an inherent, indefeasible right to con-  
 “ stitute and establish such government  
 “ for itself as best accords with its dis-  
 “ position, interest, and happiness.” So  
 that whenever any political quack wishes  
 for a job, he has no more ado than pub-  
 lish *New Rights of Man* in two parts, ad-  
 dressed to the mob, upon which a gene-  
 ral convention meets ; and no sooner mat-  
 ters are settled, than another quack comes  
 with a new system,—and then another  
 convention ;—for *at all times* the nation  
 can use its right. This, of course, will  
 produce a most delightful, ambulatory,  
 and enviable system of government,

“ Never settled, never sure !”

If this is the system you wish to erect up-  
 on the ruin of our constitution, I aver  
 with Mr Adam, that you have “ revi-  
 “ led what is most sacred in the constitu-  
 “ tion, destroyed every principle of sub-  
 “ ordination, and established nothing  
 “ but confusion in their room.”

I BEG



I BEG leave to conclude with repeating a story I recollect some where to have read. A ship returning from America to *Bordeaux*, was passing the *Tour de Corduan*, and entering the *Garonne*; the night was dark, with some little wind and rain; one of the seamen, either from laziness or a wicked disposition, refused to hand the sails when ordered, pretending that he was as well entitled to keep below as the captain and his mate; adding, that he was as good a seaman as the captain,---and he did not see but he had as good a right to be captain as he had;---that they were all bound on the same voyage, and ran the same risks; and it was ridiculous, while all were equal, that one man should lord it over the rest. The ship was soon in a ferment; and the general opinion of the moment was, that "*Tom had a great deal of reason on his side.*" In vain the captain and mate strove to bring them to order; the very

seaman at the helm left it, and joined with the crew. The ship instantly rounded, and in a few minutes struck upon the *Bank Mauvaise*. All hands on board perished except the boy, who, being the only person that had gone aloft, was afterwards picked up by an English vessel. I acknowledge to you, Mr Payne, that reading this story in my early years, it very much affected me. I was astonished why the sailors should so suddenly make up their minds, and give assent to Tom's doctrine without considering consequences ; and perhaps this very story, which has lately been exemplified in France, has led me to think farther upon your system than otherwise I would have done.

THE rude manner in which you conclude *your* letter shall not be imitated by me. From it, and some other particular strokes in your writings, I suspect  
that

that something else than your heart may  
be wrong. I pity every poor gentleman,  
and shall be willing to serve you as far  
as I can. I therefore am,

Dear Sir, your most obedient  
humble servant,

A HIGHLANDER.

EDIN. June 26, }  
1792. }









